

**From Gordon Felt, President,**

**The Families of Flight 93, May 2, 2008**

Since our formation in 2002, the Families of Flight 93 have worked tirelessly along with our partners, The National Park Service, The National Park Foundation, The Flight 93 Federal Advisory Commission and The Flight 93 Memorial Task Force to work in an open and democratic fashion to create a fitting memorial to the heroes of United Flight 93.

I am pleased to report some of the progress that has been made to achieve our goals and to let you know that our board of directors is 100% committed to seeing a dedication of Sacred Ground on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, September 11, 2011.

Among those family members closely involved in all aspects of the memorial process, our primary mission over these past few years has been: *Raising Funds, Purchasing land and Designing a fitting and respectful memorial.* Each one of these unique aspects of our efforts

plays a critical role in the development of the Flight 93 National Memorial and I'd like to briefly touch upon each of these areas.

FUND RAISING: As of May 1, 2008, over 30,000 people, corporations and foundations have demonstrated their financial support for the Flight 93 National Memorial; 5,000 of those in the past three months alone.

Our fund raising efforts, led by the National Park Foundation, include grass roots initiatives, corporate challenges and unique events such as the National Tribute in Washington, DC to be held on September 11, 2008. To date, 213 members of Congress have signed on to support this event recognizing the heroic efforts of our loved ones and to raise awareness for the Flight 93 National Memorial.

LAND: The Families of Flight 93, along with the National Park Service have been working tirelessly to secure the land on which this memorial will be built. To date, the Families of Flight 93 have purchased over 990 acres representing 75% of the land area designated for the Memorial.

Additionally, federally appropriated dollars are now being used by the

National Park Service to purchase these parcels from the Families of Flight 93.

The Flight 93 Temporary Memorial and the Flight 93 Memorial Ambassadors continue to play a major role in educating visitors about the events of 9/11. In these past few years hundreds of thousands of people from around the world have come to Somerset County to see and hear the story of Flight 93.

DESIGN: Much has been said in the press recently about a controversy related to the design of the Flight 93 National Memorial. These stories have appeared on and off over the past few years and are being driven by a relatively small number of disgruntled citizens and representatives from one of our forty families. Since the completion of the memorial design competition, we have heard claims suggesting that somehow family members of those that lost their lives on the morning of 9/11 are in some way willing or unknowing participants in the creation of a memorial secretly honoring those very terrorists that brought such death and destruction to our land. These allegations are hurtful to the

overwhelming number of families fully in support of the memorial. Furthermore, they are misleading and not based in fact. However, our experience has been that whenever we get calls related to this “conspiracy theory” we find that the facts at hand and a full description of the memorial design process quickly extinguish most if not all of the discomfort related to what people may have heard from sources unrelated to the memorial partnership. When the Flight 93 Memorial Design is taken from two dimensional drawings and visualized on the land where our loved ones lost their lives, one can see the respectful simplicity of the design and witness how it honors the land as well as those that lost their lives in a battle to overcome a group of terrorist attempting to strike at the heart of our government.

Because of our passion to create a fitting tribute to the heroes of Flight 93, the Flight 93 Memorial Partner group felt an obligation to listen to these criticisms and look into their validity. Over the past few years, we have reached out to experts in the areas of religious iconography, Islamic Law/theology and memorial design. The findings of these

experts are clear and unwavering in that people looking for controversy will find it if they look hard enough regardless of the circumstances. Our continued support for the design does not mean that we have not heard these criticisms. Our continued support for the Flight 93 Memorial design means that after having evaluated the objections to the design, we have found no merit in their claims. Therefore, we are moving forward with the current design that was selected through an open and democratic process. We remain unwavering in our dedication to seeing the successful completion and dedication of the Flight 93 National Memorial.